

## 30<sup>th</sup> Annual USOE MLK Contest

### 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Level Essay Winner

Samuel Cottam – Woods Cross High School  
Essay title “We Can Stand Up Together”

#### We Can Stand Up Together

Because I have two little African American sisters, I have seen quite a bit of racial discrimination. When my sister was in fourth grade riding the bus home, another student made fun of her for no other reason than the color of her skin. Nobody stood up for her and she came home crying. This would not have happened if someone had stopped the bullying and told them both that skin color doesn't matter. However with no one standing up for her, she thought she was inferior simply because of the color of her skin.

This comes to the heart of the issue Martin Luther King addressed when he said, “In the end we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.” If someone had just spoken up for my sister, she would not have come home crying. It would have been easy for her to dismiss the words of the bully who she didn't respect if a friend had refuted his words. However, since no one refuted the fact she was lesser for the color of her skin, she thought it must be true. Our enemies' words never truly hurt if our friends stand up next to us. However, if they don't stand up for us, the words sting and we remember and internalize the incident in the end.

We can use this quote to honor King by standing up for those who are being bullied because of the color of their skin or for any other reason. I personally have a speech impediment and say my r's like w's. My peers have made fun of me for this multiple times. I remember one time in seventh grade after wrestling practice, the other wrestlers were making fun of me for quite a while and it was honestly starting to hurt quite a lot. Eventually one of my friends stepped in and asked them all to stop since it wasn't cool. Since then they have never done that again. If we are willing to speak up against discrimination, we will begin to stop discrimination and lift people out of the trap of thinking they are less than everybody else. Also by speaking up we can stop the bullies by using positive peer pressure. If

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this would have been done with my sister, then she would have ignored the other kid, and the other kid would have learned how what he was doing is wrong.

If we simply act as true friends by respecting and speaking up for other people, then we can fulfill King’s dream and lessen discrimination. When we do this we can silence those who discriminate and lift everybody up and let them experience the American dream of equal opportunity. This also allows those different from us to feel accepted and loved and thus contribute their individual talents to society.